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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 SANAA 000576

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA, NEA/ARP, NEA/EX, S/CT, CA, DS/DSS,
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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [AMGT](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CASC](#) [YM](#) [EAC](#) [COUNTER](#) [TERRORISM](#)

SUBJECT: TFI201: SANAA VIOLENT DEMONSTRATION 3/21

AFTERMATH; EAC MEETING 3/22

REF: A. SANAA 574

[B](#). SANAA 573

Classified By: Ambassador Edmund J. Hull, for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Begin Summary: As of 1500 local March 22, no demonstrations are occurring in Sanaa after the violent 3/21 demonstration caused numerous deaths and injuries of civilians and police (reftels). Security has been further augmented around the Embassy, with the addition of more Yemeni security personnel and armored vehicles.

-- President Saleh issued a strong statement the evening of 3/21 condemning the violence and calling the demonstration illegal. He also inserted a note of solidarity with the U.S. on preventing terror while continuing to state opposition to the war in Iraq, supporting Saleh's statement supports post's expectation that the President is keen to prevent further unauthorized demonstrations getting out of control.

-- At a 3/22 meeting with MOI Brigadier General Sunaidar, DCM expressed appreciation for security provided during the demonstration and condolences for Yemeni deaths and injuries. Sunaidar said he would participate in questioning those arrested, and noted that one detained instigator of the 3/21 demonstration is a leading figure in Yemeni's chapter of the Iraqi Baath Party.

-- Post received further information early 3/22 about the location of the Yemeni Ambassador's residence in Baghdad after weeks of requests by the Embassy.

-- EAC met at 1400 to discuss the security situation. Key offices and personnel represented at the meeting included: AMB, DCM, POL/ECON, CONS, ADMIN, PD, RSO, ORCA, OMC, SOC YEMEN, FPD and RMO. End Summary.

President Saleh's Strong Statement

[1](#)2. (U) On Yemeni television and published prominently in the government daily al-Thawra, President Saleh issued a statement after his National Defense Council and Higher Security Committee meeting calling the 3/21 demonstration illegal and condemning the violence. He also said he would not allow unauthorized demonstrations and combined sympathy for the Iraqi and Palestinian peoples with the American people after 9/11. Text of statement, as translated by FBIS and Embassy, in paragraph 14.

[1](#)3. (C) In a message from Saleh, senior Presidential Advisor Mohamed Sudam told the Ambassador that opposition parties were responsible for the violence at the demonstration. Several parties, including the Iraqi Baathis, Nasserites and al-Haq, were involved and a Baathi leader was the first to speak at Tahrir Square. Sudam said that Islah party members were also involved at the beginning of the demonstration, but "faded away" long before the demonstration moved to the area near the Embassy and turned violent. He also said the General Prosecutor will investigate and prosecute those responsible.

MinInterior Response

[1](#)4. (C) DCM, accompanied by Consul and RSO, met with Brigadier General Sunaidar, Office Director for the Minister of Interior 3/22. Sunaidar said he will participate in questioning those arrested in the demonstrations, starting afternoon 3/22. They will focus initially on those who spoke to and stirred up the crowd in order to get the demonstration moving. Sunaidar indicated they do not have a full list yet of those arrested, but one of them he identified as a leading figure in Yemen's relatively small chapter of the Iraqi Baath party. DCM passed Ambassador's thanks to the Minister and appreciation for Saleh's statement. DCM inferred, in light of President's remarks, that the authorities will be anticipating any further unauthorized demonstrations, and that they will be prepared to deal with them more quickly. Sunaidar indicated he did not know of express orders to this

effect, but agreed that indeed it was likely the authorities will move quickly to head off unauthorized demonstrators. The list of American citizens in Yemen requested by the MOI to provide better security was also discussed, and Sunaidar requested the list in Arabic which Embassy will provide.

15. (C) Sunaidar said that the actions of the security forces were their "duty" and they were prepared to do it again. In terms of security enhancements, more personnel and hardware have been provided and higher restrictions on movement instituted. He also requested assistance from the USG in training its riot police on more efficient tactics for crowd control, including training for personnel and provision of equipment.

16. (U) Below the President's statement in al-Thawra, an article quoting a source from the Ministry of Interior was published. Text of statement, as translated by Embassy, in paragraph 15.

After-Midnight MFA Visit:
Finally Providing Baghdad Coordinates

17. (S/NF) After two months in DIA channels and more than three weeks through MFA channels, MFA finally responded to Embassy request for more precise information on the Yemeni Ambassador's residence in Baghdad. While no one had the GPS coordinates, the MFA sent someone who knew Baghdad well to the Embassy at 0115 Saturday 3/22 to find the residence. After poring over satellite photos for more than 45 minutes, the location was pinpointed. More follow up will be conducted if additional maps and photos are obtained.

18. (S/NF) The Yemeni Ambassador to Iraq was recalled and is in Sanaa, although other Yemeni diplomats remain in the Baghdad residence. Official Saba news agency reported 3/20 that the Yemeni embassy in Baghdad would remain open to provide consular services and assistance to Yemenis wishing to return home.

Embassy Standing Fast;
EAC Meeting 1400 local March 22

19. (S) Embassy personnel remained at StandFast and EAC agreed to maintain StandFast at least through an EAC meeting on March 23 to assess the situation. All was quiet during the night, and watchstanders detected no untoward activity around the perimeter. ORCA reported no new threats.

110. (S) EAC discussed in detail each tripwire that might warrant a change in Embassy security posture. EAC agreed that a few tripwires, including killings of Americans, demonstrations not controlled by ROYG, mosque sermons inciting anti-Americanism, serious Yemeni casualties in the suppression of demonstrations and a U.S. attack on an Arab country, bear close watch. EAC members concurred that no tripwire has been crossed to date, and that possible recurrence of violent demonstrations posed greatest present risk of a wire being tripped. EAC consensus was not to recommend a request for authorized departure at this time.

Media Reaction

11. (U) Official daily al-Thawra ran President Saleh's statement and the MOI's statement prominently on the front page. Reporting on the demonstration was placed on page three and was factual and not inflammatory. The editorial called for "national responsibility" to "confront any attempts that might destabilize the internal front." English-language newspaper Yemen Observer 3/22 did not report on the demonstration, concentrating on Iraq and the upcoming parliamentary elections.

112. (U) International television press, including CNN, al-Jazeera and MBC, reported the demonstration and showed footage of the 12-year old boy who was killed. In an interview with its Sanaa-based correspondent, Al Jazeera said that the security forces showed restraint in responding to stonethrowers and small arms fire. International written press reported widely on the violent Sanaa demonstrations, although usually as a lead for a lengthier article on demonstrations throughout the region and the world.

113. (C) CNN has run repeated ticker-line reports and other accounts estimating demonstrators at 30,000. This is a huge exaggeration of the 5-7,000 marchers and the 6-800 hard core demonstrators who remained to clash with police once violence began.

14. (U) Text of President Saleh statement:

In the name of God, the most beneficent, the merciful. The holding of this meeting, which includes members of members of the National Defense Council and the Higher Security Committee comes in the context of addressing ourselves to today's incident which took place after Friday prayers. The incident was accompanied by chaos. The demonstrators headed for both the northern and Western region in the direction of the U.S. embassy.

The demonstration, with much regret, resulted in the death of a number of victims, a child and citizen, and 14 security personnel, as well as nine civilians were injured.

We regret this painful incident. We are of the view that the people of Yemen had expressed their views in open and clear manner in the demonstrations they held last Saturday (15 March). The demonstrations were held in the capital, Sanaa, provincial and some districts headquarters. The demonstrations expressed the opinion of the people of Yemen and their political stand, at the official (government), people's and party levels.

We expressed our opinion of objecting to the war against Iraq. We also expressed our view regarding what the Arab nation of Palestine was facing, ranging from killings, terrorism and cleansing.

We consider today's incident, as announced through reports by the security organs, a violation of the law. As for today's incident we consider it as a shortcoming and a disruption of national security, despite the fact that government and people's opinions are in agreement, contrary to other Arab countries.

There are three considerations upon which we have expressed our position. We expressed opposition to the war against Iraq, we condemned the torture and terrorism of the people of Palestine, and we have condemned the terrorist actions which are directed against the United States and directed against the nation of Yemen.

In this country, the constitution, law and order govern us. Any demonstration by any political group in this country should adhere to the law and seek permission. Any political group has the right of expressing its opinion peacefully. But if it happens that this is unlawful and foolish and if it harms the security of the nation, it does not aid anyone except the enemies of the nation and does not aid the foundation of Yemen.

Regarding the terrible situation in Iraq, this is indeed frightful and scary. However, we as Yemenis and as Arab Muslims aren't the only ones that have been harmed or suffered pain. The whole world is harmed by what has resulted from this disaster.

We all generally object to the war against Iraq and what the Palestinian people are facing. We all condemn terrorist activities against the United States of America and against our country and against the lands of the Arabs and the Muslims and what has happened to the Palestinians. This position is agreed upon, by all of us, even those who have different views and different politics.

End of Text.

15. (U) Text of al-Thawra article quoting MOI source:

A well placed source in the Ministry of Interior told Saba news agency that the massive demonstration resulted after Friday prayers, did not have permission to conduct a demonstration from the Ministry of Interior, thus breaking the law. Furthermore, the security forces defended against the demonstrations through the march that occurred through the streets of the capital that approached the American Embassy. The demonstrators were trying to take control of the Embassy.

Some riotous elements among the demonstrators concealing arms started to fire randomly, a behavior that prompted the policemen to fire upward and disperse the crowd with tear gas and water hoses.

The source added, "14 policemen were injured, three critically, two demonstrators were killed and nine injured." The source explained that security authorities managed to hold some demonstrators suspected of firing their weapons, committing vandalism acts on cars and other properties belonging to citizens and they will be brought to court.

And at the end of his presentation, the source encouraged all

of the brotherly citizens to express their ideas peacefully
and far from the acts of hooliganism and to govern themselves
with the order and law that are in the interests of the
country.

End Text of article.
HULL